



Comparative Middle Ages: The Americas

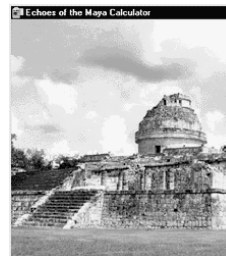
Where Were We At In Europe?

- West:
 - Decline of Roman Empire
 - Rural (Feudal) societies & infighting
 - Isolation from others in trade, religion
 - Plague
- East:
 - Contact w/ Moslems for trade, education
 - Success in preserving ancient traditions, but increased incursion of growing Moslem empires

Meanwhile...

- In the Americas indigenous civilizations were thriving:
 - Olmec and Toltec empires gave way to--
 - Aztecs (Mexico) in central Mexico
 - Maya in east central Mexico
 - Inca in S. America

Maya



- AD 250-900
- Collection of states with common culture
- Complex hieroglyphic writing system
- Mathematical advances
- Astronomical advances (calendars more accurate than European)
- Done in by civil warfare between states, cities abandoned

Inca



- AD 1200-1535
- Empire spanned ~2500 mi. north-south span of S. America, from Ecuador to southern Chile
- In the Andes, most of Empire was in high elevations

Inca, cont'd.

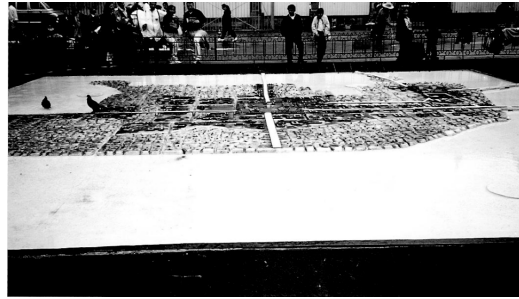


- Developed highway system in Andes
- Had very large armies
- Kept records in knotted strings called *quipu*
- Many gov't buildings, laid out as spiritual mazes
- Grew potatoes, tomatoes, corn as main staples
- Elaborate food storage system
- Nature-based mythology

Aztecs



- ~1100s-1519
- “Late-Comers” to area, were sets of weaker tribes wandering until 1325
- 1325- Established Tenochtitlan on island in present day Mexico City



Aztecs, Cont’d.

- Central Mexican Valley was home to fresh-water and saltwater lakes next to each others, with islands in between
- Set up a *tribute* system, where religion was integral part of government
- *Codex*: Record (drawing) of events
- Tenochtitlan grew to ~150,000 people at its height

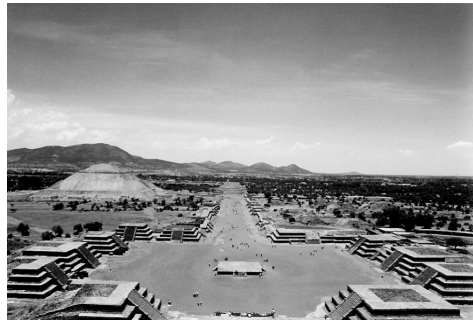
Religion

- Believed in many gods, but main one was *Quetzlcoatl*, a plumed (feathered) serpent



Religion, Cont’d.

- Calendar followed sun and moon
- Believed that gods must be fed with human blood-sacrifices made on top of pyramids
- War captives were ideal sacrifice - Aztecs set up “mock wars” to get captives
- Cities depended on *tribute* from surrounding kingdoms, in terms of food and men





Decline of Aztecs

- Ever-increasing need for sacrifices greatly reduced:
 - Male population in area
 - Ability to keep food supplies going
 - Willingness of kingdoms to support Aztecs
- Spanish (Cortez) - 1519
 - End of Aztec Empire!
 - Aztec point of view = :(

